IN THE ABSTRACT:

The Abstract as amended below with a replacement Abstract shows added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~.

Please DELETE the Abstract in its entirety and substitute the attached new Abstract.

After processing~~thinning a fingerprint image in a conventional method~~, a target feature point is detected. ~~The feature point is assigned an ID, and the information about each feature point is managed.~~ ~~The information~~Information about a target feature point includes~~stores the information indicating~~ the position of the ridge containing a vicinal feature point relative to the position of the ridge containing the target feature point in addition to the position, type, and direction of the target feature point ~~itself~~. Then, the information ~~about the target feature point~~ is checked in a matching process, and the vicinal feature point is ~~also~~ checked ~~in the matching process~~ on a feature point contained in a ridge matching in position the ridge of the target feature point. When the target feature point and the vicinal feature point match ~~each other~~ in position and direction, and are different ~~from each other~~ in type only, the mark has ~~is reduced to~~ a value indicating a matching level. Then, a matching result of the vicinal feature points is obtained as a matching mark, and it is determined whether ~~or not~~ the target feature point is matching by determining whether ~~or not~~ the matching mark is equal to or larger than a threshold.

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